

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 163458 TOSEC 060103

EXDIS

FOLL REPEAT ATHENS 5203 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ANKARA, NICOSIA

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QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 5203

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, US, TU

SUBJECT: BITSIOS COMPLAINS ABOUT ALLEGED STATEMENTS BY
US "OFFICIALS" CONCERNING AID TO TURKEY

1. FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS TELEPHONED ME EARLY THIS
AFTERNOON IN A QUITE AGITATED STATE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT
STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO "US OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON".
HE SAID THAT "VERY RELIABLE SOURCES"--HE DID NOT TELL
ME WHO--HAVE INFORMED HIM AND PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS
THAT US OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN SAYING IN WASHINGTON THAT
PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS "HAS NO OBJECTION" TO THE
RESUMPTION OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY. HE SAID
THAT CARAMANLIS WAS "UPSET" BY THIS AND WANTED HIS CONCERN
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CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON AT ONCE.

2. BITSIOS SAID THAT AS HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY MADE CLEAR TO US OFFICIALS, INCLUDING DURING THE SUMMIT MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS, NO GREEK GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL CAN BE EXPECTED TO SIGNAL IN ANY WAY THAT HE IS IN FAVOR OF OR INDIFFERENT TOWARDS US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY. HE SAID HE AND CARAMANLIS HAVE DONE THEIR UTMOST TO AVOID ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT WHATEVER ON THE MATTER AND HAVE TAKEN THE POSITION THAT THIS IS AN INTERNAL QUESTION IN THE US. HOWEVER, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT CANNOT ALLOW US OFFICIALS TO APPEAR TO BE SPEAKING FOR THE GREEK GOVERNMENT OR TO CHARACTERIZE THE VIEWS OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS INCORRECTLY. IN ANALOGOUS CIRCUMSTANCES LAST DECEMBER, HE REMINDED ME, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT FELT COMPELLED TO ISSUE A STATEMENT --BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION IN GREECE AND PARLIAMENTARY CRITICISM--SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT AND AFFIRMING THAT WHILE THIS WAS AN INTERNAL MATTER IN THE US, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WAS NOT INDIFFERENT TO ITS OUTCOME. BITSIOS SAID THAT HE HOPED THE REPORTED REMARKS BY US OFFICIALS WERE UNFOUNDED BECAUSE OTHERWISE THE GOG MIGHT BE FORCED TO ISSUE SOME KIND OF STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT AGAIN.

3. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT I HAD NOT SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING TO INDICATE THAT USG OFFICIALS WERE ENDEAVORING TO CHARACTERIZE THE POSITION OF CARAMANLIS OR THE GREEK GOVERNMENT ON THIS MATTER. I URGED HIM NOT TO BE PRECIPITATE IN SAYING ANYTHING ON THIS SUBJECT BECAUSE IT COULD EASILY BE MISUNDERSTOOD AND COMPLICATE AN ALREADY EXTREMELY DIFFICULT SITUATION. BETSIOS SAID THAT HE WANTED TO AVOID HAVING TO ISSUE ANY STATEMENT BUT THAT THIS WOULD DEPEND ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND THE REACTION HERE. AFTER ALL, HE SAID, WHAT CAN WE DO? ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO, PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL MADE A PUBLIC STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE ISLANDS IN THE AEGEAN DID NOT BELONG TO GREECE BUT HAD ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE. "THE GREEK GOVERNMENT CAN HARDLY BE INDIFFERENT TO LEARN THAT ARMS MAY ONCE AGAIN BE SENT BY THE US TO A COUNTRY WHERE SUCH ARMS MAY LATER BE USED AGAINST GREECE THE WAY THEY WERE USED AGAINST GREEK CYPRIOTS," HE SAID.

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4. COMMENT: I DO NOT KNOW THE SOURCE OR SOURCES OF BITSIOS' INFORMATION BUT I CAN THINK OF SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES. I HOPE AFTER ALL WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH WITH CARAMANLIS, BITSIOS AND OTHERS ON THIS POINT THAT NO USG OFFICIALS ARE PRESENTLY TRYING TO CHARACTERIZE THEIR VIEWS AS BITSIOS HAS SAID, OTHERWISE WE MAY BE FACED WITH ANOTHER ANGRY GREEK GOVERNMENT DENIAL OR CLARIFICATION

THAT WOULD COMPLICATE MATTERS IN WASHINGTON. AT THE SAME TIME, I DO NOT EXCLUDE THAT BITSIOS RAISED THIS THE WAY HE DID AS A PRECAUTIONARY DE MARCHE IN ORDER TO REMIND US OF THE GREEK GOVERNMENT'S POSITION AND TO HEAD OFF ANY POSSIBLE IMPRUDENT STATEMENTS BY USG OFFICIALS.

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